

“transporting, as ballast water of a vessel in at least one ballast tank, separate from a cargo carrying tank of the vessel, the domestic treated water into which domestic wastewater is treated and supplying the domestic treated water to demanders of the domestic treated water.” (Taking claim 1 as an example).

An important feature to recognize in this claim language is that the present invention is directed to transporting domestic treated water (from treated domestic wastewater) in a ballast tank of a ship, separate from a cargo carrying tank of the vessel. It is respectfully submitted that Tanaka and Kluss simply completely fail to teach or suggest this feature.

A major advantage of transporting domestic treated water in the ballast tank of a ship is that ballast water is necessary anyway, and by transporting domestic treated water as the required ballast water, it is possible to make the required ballast water into useful cargo (i.e., the domestic treated water). Further, because the domestic treated water will be provided to “demanders of the domestic treated water” at the destination (as defined in the claim), it will not be necessary to discharge the ballast water into a foreign harbor, which often causes undesirable contamination of such foreign water with various organisms and impurities from another country. In other words, it is possible to transport domestic treated water from one location to another without utilizing space which would otherwise be unavailable for other cargo.

In addition, it is noted that cargo tanks on vessels are generally used for transporting oil or other types of liquids (other than water). Therefore, if a normal cargo tank is used for domestic treated water, there is a high likelihood of contamination of the domestic treated water, making it unsuitable for uses such as agricultural water. Therefore, because a ballast tank is typically used to carry water anyway, the claimed feature of utilizing the transaction supporting system (or method) with the claimed storing means, matching means, register means, display

creation means, communication means and correction means (or their method equivalents for claims 4 and 5) permits a useful purpose for the ballast tank other than the mere providing of ballast water. This is completely unsuggested by either the primary reference to Tanaka or the secondary reference to Kluss or any of the cited prior art in this matter.

With regard to the issue of ballast water, on the paragraph bridging pages 5 and 6, the Office Action refers to column 21 of Kluss as teaching "charterer requirement information requires ballast water quantity." The fact that Kluss is concerned with the required amount of ballast water has absolutely nothing to do with suggesting that a ballast tank could be used for transporting domestic treated water, together with the specific features of the transaction supporting system and method defined in the independent claims 1, 4 and 5 and their dependent claims. In particular, it is noted that the system and the method defined in these independent claims specifically relates the size of the ballast tank of the vessel with the claimed supply system or method by virtue of the recitation of:

•correction means for correcting said demand information and said supply information on the basis of a maximum transport water quantity of said domestic treated water said vessel can transport in said at least one ballast tank."

In other words, this feature, defined in each of the independent claims 1, 4 and 5, provides a specific interconnection between the demand for domestic treated water and the size of the ballast tank, which is clearly completely lacking from any of the cited references.

Accordingly, in light of the above-noted shortcomings of the cited prior art in meeting the specific requirements of the independent claims 1, 4 and 5 and their


dependent claims, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-17 of the present application over the cited prior art is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes that there are any other points which may be clarified or otherwise disposed of either by telephone discussion or by personal interview, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to the Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Docket No. 513.46526X00), and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,
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